

TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

A CHOICE SELECTION OF INTERESTING ITEMS.

Comments and Criticisms Based Upon the Happenings of the Day—Historical and News Notes.

The man who hurries is frequently only spurring a rocking horse.

In Russia the question assumes this form: "What shall we do with our ex-crooks?"

Speaking of current political repairs, how would you like to be called a cipher with the rim off?

Taxes are to be increased in England, so that the royal family may not have to discharge any of its help.

In the bright and shining lexicon of political candidates, many are boomed and few escape being boomeranged.

If the average man eats three times as much food as he needs what about the man who goes in for lobsters after the theater?

Circus elephants, being intelligent and observant animals, probably have found out that there is a shortage in the peanut crop this year.

Evanson women propose to try the effect of piecwork in the kitchen; yet Bridget has been an expert at this ever since crockery was invented.

A book publisher declares that no first-class fiction is being produced these days. Let him keep his eye on the resolutions of the political conventions.

The mother of nine children who, deserted by her husband, declares she can take care of her family, might well be the first beneficiary of Mr. Carnegie's hero fund.

A woman calls herself a good housekeeper when she worries for fear if the house burned down the neighbors would talk about the state in which she left the ruins when she ran out.

One of the entertaining professors says every married woman should be a wage-earner. This might easily be arranged. Let every married woman be paid \$5 a week for doing her own housework.

One of the Japanese officers who were killed at Port Arthur has been elevated to the rank of war god in Japan. Still, comparatively few of us would care to be blown to pieces even for that high honor.

It is worth noting that in the 7th year of Meiji (1874) there broke out the Formosan war; in the 17th the conflict in Korea; in the 27th the China-Japan war, and the present year, the 37th of Meiji, is again disastrous to peace.

Considerable alarm was created a short time ago by the news that some one had said a woman of fashion should have at least ten new hats each season. The alarm subsided when it was discovered that the person who made the statement was the head of the National Milliners' Association.

Berlin was recently connected with Copenhagen by a new international ferry. The boats run between Warnemunde, on the German coast, and Gjedsted, on one of the Danish islands, and carry through trains over the 20-mile stretch of water between the two points. The ferry makes it possible for a traveler to go in almost a straight line between the two capitals without change of cars.

When a modern steam threshing machine was introduced into the country about Damascus—it was made in Indiana—the Governor General of the province, a field marshal of the Turkish army and other high officials watched it begin its work of super-seeding the threshing methods which the country had inherited from the days of Abraham. The machine was so heavy that on its way to the fields it broke down several bridges, but was able to pull itself out of the streams, to the surprise of the natives. With American machinery in the harvest-fields, there will soon be two Damascus blades where only one grew before.

The denial of the power of a State Legislature to prohibit the use of the national flag for advertising, on the ground that it is not a proper exercise of the police power, implicitly denies that any question of public policy of the State is involved in such use of the flag, or else denies that the Legislature is the proper authority to determine what such public policy is. Though two able courts have decided that such a statute is unconstitutional, there seems to be, nevertheless, much reason in contending that this is a question of public policy, which it is the business of the Legislature, and not of the courts, to decide. But if it is correct to hold that the State law cannot prohibit the use of a representation of the flag in connection with advertising it does not follow that Congress might not do so.

From three important institutions of learning have come severe complaints about the illiteracy of the students, their inability to think clearly, to make correct sentences, to spell and punctuate. This does not mean that college boys are a picked class of illiterates; they probably think as well as their contemporaries who are not in college, and they probably write and speak the language better. The charge of the older teachers seems to be that the present generation of youth is not, as a whole, up to a reasonable standard. The charge points to the lower schools. Perhaps there is too much "nature study" and "physical culture," too much painting and pasting of bits of colored paper. Certainly there is not enough reading aloud, spelling aloud, and committing to memory thoughts worth thinking. The boy who learns by heart Webster's Bunker Hill oration, speaks it aloud with proper emphasis, and can spell every word in it, is getting the right kind of education. And when he goes to college, his in-

structors will not find in him cause to blame the lower schools.

The New York World urges parents to cease burdening boy babies with the names of famous men. The thing has been overdone. When William Dean Howells Green faces the police judge on a charge of chicken stealing, and Henry Cabot Lodge Jones goes to the calaboose for wife beating, there does seem to be something out of whack with the eternal fitness of things. In the near future it would be possible to organize regiments of William Jennings Bryans and Theodore Roosevelt, with a company or two of Grover Cleveland in the procession. There is another side to it. Great men are but men, after all. Up to the day of their death it is possible for them to clothe their names with shame. They may become as infamous as they formerly were famous. There is history for this statement. Then what is to be done for the lad who wears a name that has become offensive in the ears of the people? Indirectly he is bound to pay a penalty for the sins of another. There can be no objection to using the name of one who has won glory and died; but to copy the names of the living is, at best, a hazard. It is certainly due to babies that their names shall never be a handicap. They have a hard enough time getting through life at best.

Secretary Dike, of the National League for the Protection of the Family, has submitted a new summary of the reasons for uniformity of divorce laws throughout all the States, and uniformity is to be gained, he contends, by concerted action of the several States, not by national legislation. Congress cannot pass a divorce law until the federal constitution has been amended, and amendment to the federal constitution is next to the impossible. Nearly 15 years ago a committee of the American Bar Association declared that a constitutional amendment was out of the question. The late Prof. Thayer, of the Harvard Law School, used to say that this country would never get another constitutional amendment on any question, so great are the difficulties in the way. Certainly some great crisis must arise which will arouse the feeling of the people, more than any mere moral question ever can, before another amendment can be secured. Throughout the South there is unalterable opposition to any further transfer of power from the States to the national government. It may also be added that there is less need in the South of laws to restrict divorces than in any other part of the country. Besides, there appears no good reason why the national government should do for the States what the States can, if they will, better do for themselves. The States have no difficulty in getting together on uniform laws relating to money affairs; so it would seem there is no insuperable obstacle to their getting together on a vital question of morals. Since the several States can agree to protect the banks, the way is open to an agreement to protect the homes. The courts of Delaware, according to Mr. Dike, are forbidden to entertain a suit for divorce for any cause arising prior to the residence of the petitioner in that State unless it were also a ground for divorce in the State where it arose. The adoption of a similar law in all the States would effectually end the migrations for divorce. It would put an end to the rivalry for divorce fees between the States which induces so much of the liberality of the laws. But, after all, public opinion is the great power that not only can render divorce odious, but influence laws against it. Mr. Dike calls upon the churches to get together. That would be a good example to the States.

OLD EGYPTIAN LANGUAGES. Forthcoming Dictionary Compiled by Berlin Academy of Sciences.

A brief dispatch from Berlin conveys intelligence which will thrill the heart of every scholar. It announces the near completion of Professor Erman's monumental "Dictionary of the Ancient Egyptian Languages," a work undertaken by the Kaiser, compiled by the Berlin Academy of Sciences and aided in no small degree by the best American erudition. Professor Erman, the editor, is easily the foremost Egyptologist of the world, though he has toiled in a field wherein there has been friendly contention for many years among the scholars of France, England, Germany, Italy and America, says the Philadelphia Ledger.

The oldest records of the Egyptian language date back to about B. C. 4000 and it did not die out as a tongue until about three centuries ago. Professor Erman's great book will, of course, embrace its long history and the many changes it underwent.

In one of his own published monographs on the subject he shows how the language of the old Egyptian empire was no more intelligible to an Egyptian of the nineteenth dynasty, for example, than Latin would be to the average Italian of the present day. Long after old Egyptian, the classical tongue of the old empire, had ceased to be spoken, it led an artificial life as a learned language, playing much the same part as Latin played in medieval Europe, and was regularly employed for religious and monumental purposes down to the Roman period. Then followed the middle Egyptian, representing an intermediate stage between the language of the old and the new empire.

In it most of the old forms and inflections are retained, but some of the peculiarities of the later speech make their appearance, this being the Neo-Egyptian or popular language about B. C. 1500-1000. It is represented by a number of papyrus containing tales, poems, letters and legal documents. From about B. C. 700 to the Christian era the language of the Egyptian people was the demotic, about which comparatively little is known; and it was succeeded by the language of Christian Egypt, or Coptic, written in a modification of the Greek alphabet with the addition of characters derived from the demotic. As a spoken language it perished about 300 years ago, but is still employed in the ritual of the Coptic church.

Getting married is a serious business; but many people are willing to risk it.

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